

NAACP

4805 Mt. Hope Drive
Baltimore, MD 21215

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To whom it may concern:

A group of concerned citizens have composed this letter in support of the students that attend Block High School located in Jonesville, Louisiana (Catahoula Parish). The students are actively protesting trying to petition for much needed change in order to receive a decent education. For years the adults that live in our area have been aware of this dire situation but have failed to do anything about it. We are ashamed that it took the students themselves to take the matter into their own hands in order to call attention to the dilemma.

We strongly believe this is a racial matter due to a "white flight" going on for years out of the Jonesville schools into the Harrisonburg schools. Harrisonburg is another small town in Catahoula parish that is predominately white with mostly white teachers. There are actually white students that live in our neighboring parish, Concordia, and in the Jonesville school district that are allowed to come up with varying legal reasons to attend Harrisonburg schools. There are also teachers in the Harrisonburg schools that have publicly stated that if Catahoula parish schools are consolidated they will quit teaching.

We know schools are federally funded but we do not feel the money that is received by Catahoula Parish School Board is fairly dispersed. The students in the Jonesville schools are and have been discriminated on the basis of race for years it is just not addressed or admitted openly. The only students left in the Jonesville schools are from economically challenged families that do not have the means for them to go anywhere else. Those children are basically "stuck" in the Jonesville schools due to not being able to attend school anywhere else meanwhile the schools in Jonesville continue to get worse year after year!

This is a post a Block High School student posted on Facebook in her own words on 09/10/18, "Protest at Block High School: for those of you who don't know what's going on at block I'm here to let you in on it. First off I want to say that I am informing you but also respecting your right to your own opinion, I also know that there is things getting accomplished in our school but not enough. To many parents and to much of the community doesn't know what's going on at Block High School. The school board & our principle decided on the school having 4 classes a day. We have the first 4 classes Monday & Thursday 2nd set of 4 classes Tuesday and Friday then Wednesday we have all 8 classes. These classes are an hour & a half hour long. If you don't understand how bad this is for the kids keep reading. We have to sit in a class for and hour and a half and we only work the first 30 minutes of class then those extra hours doing absolutely nothing. Block High School has become nothing. Block High School has become something terrible. The desks have been here since the school opened. There falling apart and the Ag shop is continually welding and building wood back on them because there torn to pieces. The books that we do have are falling apart and have ripped pages & no one is finding replacements. In one of my classes we have 15 books for 40 students to share. When I tell this school is ridiculous I mean it. The carpets are MOLDY from the air conditioners leaking water on the floor and nothings being done. A&B building is shut down because we don't have money to pay the lights? We have 8th-12th grade in ONE HALL, we are crowded and stuffed in these little & nasty classrooms. What kind of mess is that? When a school board is here and everyone plays "good teacher or good staff" When the school board visits this school for inspections and sit ins. Harrisonburg, Sicily Island, & Central have

new books nice desk & certified teachers. What about Block. Nobody cares about Block anymore. We're considered trashy and out of control. All we want is our education and if a school can't give that to us why are we going? I haven't learned what I'm already suppose to know in 11th grade because I've been in Jonesville all of my life. The school board really acts like they care but haven't did anything yet. WE RECEIVED GRANTS THIS YEAR. Where is that money cause it's sure not being put in the school?? Do I have material to study or material to prepare me for college? I am literally struggling and teaching myself in most classes. Most classes are taught online because we don't have materials. The school board needs to start doing something with block. We need consolidation and we need to get this school right. I hope the parents who are completely clueless about the mess Block is in I hope you see how much of an education your kids are really getting. Help us stand up for our education, Help us get our school back. Please share so others can understand the stuff going on at Block High School. PLEASE COME OUT AND SUPPORT YOUR KIDS AND RELATIVES TOMORROW MORNING AT 8:00 when the bell rings for another protest."

It is a sad day indeed when a child attends a school in such a deplorable condition and has to protest in order to TRY to receive an education while the powers that be look the other way ☹

The parish school superintendent, Dr. Guile Freeman is also the Human Resource Director which is questionable. There is a shortage of teachers at Block due to Dr. Freeman stating no one has applied but others in the community disagree with her claiming to know better. It is strange that the schools in Harrisonburg are fully staffed with certified teachers but Block High School has a teacher shortage having to use some employees which do not even have a college degree. The students at Block are mostly taught either online or through satellite learning. It is also a well known fact in our area that Dr. Freeman controls the local school board by telling them how to vote regarding making decisions. For the most part Dr. Freeman is the one making most of the decisions regarding the school situation in Catahoula Parish.

We have attached an article from our local newspaper, the Catahoula News Booster regarding a public forum that was held on 09/17/18 to address public concerns. Our local newspaper even provided a live feed on Facebook the night of the forum. Members of the audience were not allowed to voice their opinions and had to sit through 64 questions and answers that were prepared prior to the forum. So, to make a long story short, the forum appeared to have been rehearsed with the issues of Block High School left unaddressed and the audience went home even more frustrated than before.

There is a football coach that was hired for the 2018-2019 school year that is also a Catahoula Parish Police Jury member. He has been instrumental in encouraging the students to voice their concerns. He is giving the students hope in an otherwise hopeless situation. His name is Benny Vault, Jr. and his cell # is (318) 403-1203. He currently teaches/coaches at Block High School and has been a great inspiration for the students!

Please investigate and if possible do whatever needs to be done to help us in making much needed changes in the Catahoula Parish School System for the sake of the children, especially the ones at Block High School. Every child has the right to be educated because without being provided a good education the child's chance for a better future is diminished ☹ Thank you for hearing us out!

Concerned citizens of Catahoula Parish regarding the plight of the schools in Jonesville, Louisiana